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AT

HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF  
HAMPTON, N. H.,  
FOR 250 YEARS,  

---

1638-1888,  

---

AND OF THE  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
IN HAMPTON, N. H.

*John Alexander Ross*

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HAVERHILL, MASS.,  
C. C. MORSE & SON,  
1901.





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Ross, John Alexander,

Historical sketch of Hampton, N. H., for 250 years, 1638-1888, and of the Congregational church in Hampton, N. H. Haverhill, Mass., C. C. Morse & son, 1901.

1 p. l., 25 p. 21<sup>cm</sup>.

1. Hampton, N. H.—Congregational church. I. Title.

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Sermon DCCL.

HISTORY OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN HAMPTON.

Deut. XXXII: 7.

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee.”

Our thoughts today go back two hundred and fifty years, when, on that lovely September day, the little company sailed up yon winding river, and saw competency, if not wealth, in the grass of the vast marshes rustling in the autumnal breeze and flashing in the golden light of the setting sun. Over these marshes the Indian chased the game. The smoke of the wigwam went up on the clear air from amid the pines. Fish rose in the stream to the splash of the oar. Birds, dreading no more destructive weapon than the infrequent arrow, on careless wing rose from beside the streams and skimmed the marshes and rested in the pine-tops. The waves sung their hoarse song, of which the ear never tires, along yon beautiful beach; and Boar's Head pushed her front into the sea, “shouldering the tide away,” and defying the Atlantic's fiercest storms. More than two hundred and fifty years after Whittier sang:—

Now rest we, where this grassy mound  
His feet hath set  
In the great waters, which have bound  
His granite ancles greenly round  
With long and tangled moss, and weeds with cool spray wet.”

This description was apt two hundred and fifty years before. It was well described in the old records a fair and goodly land, and it still is. What a pity father Bachiler had the musical and significant Indian name Winnicunett, “The Beautiful Place of Pines,” changed for the non-significant name Hampton!



Stephen Bachiler, the leader of this little band of stout men, was himself a kingly man, though the blood of Tudor or Stuart did not flow in his veins. He stood erect, like one of the pines of Winnicunett, though carrying the weight of seventy-seven years. When seventy years old he crossed the Atlantic, and on the third day after his arrival at Boston had a church organized at Lynn. With characteristic energy and independence, waiting no man's time and asking no man's permission, without council or installation, he organized the church, and went to work. One of his first ministerial duties was to baptise four infants. Putting aside the one first presented he passed to his own grandson with the words, "I will baptise my own child first." That's father Bachiler. His restless energy and contempt of authority, and may be other causes, (for he was not a perfect man) soon got him into trouble. From Lynn he went to Ipswich. In the unusually cold winter of 1637, he, in his seventy-sixth year, with a few companions travelled through the snow on foot one hundred miles to what is now Yarmouth. We next find him at Newbury, where land was granted him. And on the sixth of September, 1638, the General Court of Massachusetts granted him permission to settle at Winnicunett. His frequent migrations do not remind me of Noah's dove seeking rest for the sole of her foot. There was not much of the dove about father Bachiler. His wanderings suggest the flight of the imperial eagle on kingly wing sweeping over forest and hill and plain, till he find fit home and resting place beside the great sea.

At this early period so closely interlinked were ecclesiastical and political affairs that it is difficult to separate the history of the church from that of the town. The religious assembly and the town meeting were held in the same building. These sturdy settlers





of the marsh and the forest were even then disposed to recognize no king but God.

In September of 1638 the fifty-six original settlers laid out the township of Winnicunett, and organized, or may be continued the organization of, the oldest church in New Hampshire with Stephen Bachiler as pastor. The name seems to have been changed to Hampton on June 6, 1639. I should like to give here a paper probably written by father Bachiler; but it is too long. Instead I will give a short extract from Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence:—After stating that Hampton had her foundation stone "scituate not farre from the famous River of Merrimack," and that "the great store of salt marsh did intice the people to set down their habitations there, having about four hundred and fifty head of cattle," the writer proceeds, "and for the form of the town it is like a Flower de luce, two streets of houses wheeling off from the main body thereof; the land is fertile, but filled with swamps and some store of rocks, the people are about sixty families; being gathered in Church covenant, they called to office the reverend, grave and gracious Mr. Dalton, having also for some little space of time the more ancient Mr. Bachiler to preach unto them also."

Thus the church is planted in the wilderness. But a place is needed in which to meet for worship. Before their own homes were finished the little log meeting-house went up on the Ring, near where Mr. Holmes now lives. And the bell must have summoned the worshippers; for at the second town meeting of which we have any record, "on the 22nd of the 9th mo., 1639," we find this vote:—"Wm. Sanborne (with his consent) is appointed to ring the Bell before the meetings (on the Lord's dayes and other dayes); for which he is to have 6d. per lott of every one having a lott within the Towne." How strange the sound of the bell, startling





the echoes amid the pine woods, and rolling across the marshes! How sweet the sound to the early settlers in the wilderness! Memories of home were in it. It recalled the green lanes of old England, and the ivy-covered churches, where many of them had plighted their marriage vows, and some had left their dead. But we hear no word of repining from these brave men and true women. And a worthier home for the worship of their God must be built. In a town meeting of the following year it was voted, That Richard Knight build a "meeting-house frame 40 foot long, & 22 foot wide, with ye studdes 13 foot high (between joynte) 8 or 9 inches broad, & 18 inches only betwixt studd & studd with girt windows & a place for the Bell (now given by ye reverend pastor) 5 or 6 beams; 5 or 6 pair of principal rafters, & the rest answerable, to be payed, the one halfe in money or work by the tyme the frame is up, and the other halfe in money or beasts (at reasonable prices) within one yeare after." At a town meeting one year after this, "agreement is made to defray the charge of ye meeting-house by voluntary gifte." And although not completed in 1644, it must have been occupied in 1640; for we read then of the porch being used as a watch-house. It was a plain building, without chimney or stove, at first without galleries, with a pulpit, and may be a pew for the minister; with unenclosed seats, probably without backs, where the men and women sat apart, and the young people sat by themselves, and the services of the tything man were needed to keep them in order. The prayers and sermons were long. But the people met to worship. They believed in a God who was ever with them, and ordered all the events of their lives. With fervor they sang from Dunster's Psalms. Devoutly they stood through the long prayer. With patience, if not always with profit, they listened to the always doctrinal, but not always practical, sermon; and



during the week discussed its teachings in the field and by the fireside. We will not look too closely into the causes of the fierce quarrel between father Bachiler and his colleague, teacher Dalton. They were both men of high temper and stubborn will. Father Bachiler was deposed and excommunicated, left Hampton in 1647, married a third wife when eighty-nine years old, and returned to England in 1650, where he married again, his third wife being still living. The chronicler quaintly adds, "How much longer he lived, and how many more wives he married, is unknown." He died at Hackney, near London, in his hundredth year.

Thus ended the long and wandering life of Hampton's first pastor,--a man not always easy to get along with, somewhat arbitrary and imperious; but withal a man of large brain and large heart; a born leader of men; always taking on himself the heavier burden, and claiming the foremost place where danger was; and by his virtues and unselfishness making many steadfast friends. Prince quaintly says, --He was "a man of fame in his day, a gentleman of learning and ingenuity, and wrote a fine and curious hand." The author of Wonder-Working Providence is not so complimentary:

"Through ocean large Christ brought thee for to feede  
His wandering flock, with words thou oft has taught;  
Then teach thyselfe with others, thou hast need;  
Thy flowing fame unto low ebbe is brought.

Faith and obedience Christ full neare hath joined;  
Then trust on Christ, and thou again must be  
Brought on the race though now far cast behind,  
Run to the end, and crowned thou shalt be."

With father Bachiler was associated as teacher Timothy Dalton, one of the original settlers. After father Bachiler's departure, he seems to have had a fairly quiet and prosperous ministry. The meeting-house was completed during his ministry. He had a farm of 300 acres, and for some years at least a salary of forty





pounds. After 1652 he seems to have received no salary, and, probably owing to failing health, performed no pastoral or ministerial work, although retaining the title and (I think) the official authority until his death, December 28, 1661. Rather singular duties were expected of ministers in those days. At different times he was chosen with two others "to sett the bonds between Hampton and Colchester" (now Salisbury); with five others "to go and view the highway towards Colchester," and "on a committee to confer about a ferri-place." Teacher Dalton was a more consistent man than his first colleague; but I think not so able a man, nor so unselfish. He seemed to know how to look out for himself, and acquired considerable property. Still we find him relinquishing four years' salary, which the town owed him; and his famous Deed, from which came the ministerial fund, was partly gift. "He conveyed by this Deed to the church and town of Hampton for the use of the ministry forever, certain portions of his land for the sum of 200 pounds sterling." Johnson in his *Wonder-Working Providence* calls him "the reverend, grave and gracious Mr. Dalton;" and gives him a glowing poetic eulogy, which is too long to quote in full. He was an able theologian, strictly orthodox, and somewhat intolerant. He had a keen eye for Quakers and witches, although not directly concerned in the persecution of Eunice Cole. Johnson sings of him:

"Age crownes thy head, in righteousness proceed  
To batter down, root up and quite destroy  
All Heresies and Errors that draw back  
Unto perdition, and Christ's folks annoy."

What is mortal of him rests in yonder cemetery. Peace be to his ashes. He laid a foundation stone in this venerable church. I would lay my tribute wreath on his tombstone, if I could only find it. Is it not somewhat to our shame that the tombstones of these fathers of the church and town are lying neglected, and



hidden by the rank grass?

But how did the strictly orthodox Dalton get along with his somewhat heretical colleague, John Wheelwright? It seems to me that there must have been friction between men of such positive character as they both were, and so divergent in theological opinion. In those days men contended rather too earnestly for what they were pleased to call the faith once delivered to the saints. Of course THEY were "the saints." Wheelwright was brother-in-law of the famous Mrs. Hutchinson of Boston, and shared to some extent her views. If he did not, as she did, claim immediate revelation as the guide of his conduct, nor denounce in equally extravagant terms the magistrates and ministers; he had very little respect for authority, civil or ecclesiastical, and in his doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit came perilously near to fanaticism, and pushed his doctrine of justification to the verge of antinomianism. When Mrs. Hutchinson was banished from the colony and went to Rhode Island, he withdrew to Exeter, and formed a settlement and church there. His claim to Winnicunett, founded on a grant from Indians, was rightfully disallowed by the General Court of Massachusetts. We next find him at Wells, in the province of Maine. The General Court having removed the sentence of disability on the acknowledgment of his errors, he was called to Hampton, then claimed by Massachusetts. The call is a curiosity. I should like to give it in full, if I had time. The good people of Hampton were evidently somewhat afraid of his love of change or aptness to stir up strife. They frame the call with all the carefulness and minute particularity of a legal document. Mr. Wheelwright is offered free transportation from Wells to Hampton, 40 pounds per year, a house and house-lot, and "the farm that was Mr. Bachiler's." To raise the salary it was voted:—"Every





master of a familie shall paye 5 shillings to the some of 40 pounds; & be more or lesse, according as the some or somes of the rates are; & all single-men, which goeth at ther owne hand, ore that taketh anye wages for themselves, they shall likewise paye 5 shillings as aforesayd." "Then what remaineth shall be raised upon the estate of every person equally, according to that they do possesse — be it in houses, land, cattle, boates, or otherwise; excepting only ther corne, which shall goe rate-free." A like salary was at the same time voted to teacher Dalton.

Mr. Wheelwright seems to have had a quiet and prosperous ministry here. May be he had learned wisdom by experience. Permission was given by the town to certain persons to build a gallery in the west end of the meeting-house, to be held as their own property; and a substantial fence was erected about the cemetery. When Mr. Wheelwright's orthodoxy was questioned by two leading ministers of the times, his church stood loyally by him, and petitioned the General Court in his behalf. It is a grand characteristic of this church to be loyal to its minister. It is safer disturbing a bee-hive than laying an unfriendly finger on the occupant of this pulpit. The rash man who attempts it, will have reason to wish he had never been born. And Mr. Wheelwright must have been a practical and profitable preacher. The following extract from one of his sermons is good preaching for the present time:—"Thirdly, let us have a care, that we do show ourselves holy in all manner of good conversations, both in private and public; and in all our carriages and conversations, let us have a care to endeavor to be holy as the Lord is; let us not give occasion to those who are coming on, or manifestly opposite to the ways of grace, to suspect the way of grace; let us carry ourselves, that they may be ashamed to blame us; let us deal uprightly with those with whom



we have occasion to deal, and have a care to guide our families and to perform duties that belong to us; and let us have a care that we give not occasion to say that we are libertines or antinomians." The extract certainly justifies the eulogy of this church, — that "he was a sound, orthodox, and profitable minister of the gospel." It is not certain when he left Hampton. He was here in 1654, for in December of that year it was voted that 10 pounds be added to his salary. This year is noted for the remarkable hail-storm. The storm was in June. In some places the hail lay twelve inches deep, "and was not all dissolved 2 days after the storme in many places, as we are informed by many eye-witnesses, and many of which haile were said to be 3 or 4 inches in length." I infer from the record of a town-meeting held December, 1656, that he was then about leaving, or that there was trouble between him and Mr. Dalton. But the vote is so ambiguously worded that no positive statement can be ventured on it. In 1658 he was in England, and high in favor with Oliver Cromwell, who said that, when he and Wheelwright were fellow-students at Cambridge, he was more afraid of meeting him at football than he was afterwards of meeting an army in the field. He returned to this country, and died at Salisbury in 1679, between 80 and 90 years of age.

Mr. Wheelwright's successor and Mr. Dalton's next colleague, Rev. Seaborn Cotton, so called because born at sea, inherited all the stiff Calvinism of his father, the famous John Cotton of Boston. There is a volume of his sermons in manuscript in the Massachusetts Historical Library. How hollow a sound these old controversies now have! Then these creeds pulsed with life. To-day that valley is full of dry bones; and lo, they are very dry. After some delay Mr. Cotton was installed pastor in 1660 or thereabouts; two years after that unseasonably cold weather that came on after the apple





trees were in blossom, — the change in temperature so sudden, and the cold so severe that “in a fishing boat belonging to Hampton one man died before he could reach the shore, another was so chilled that he died in a few days, and a third lost his feet.” His salary was fixed at sixty pounds. He had also a house given him, and a farm of 200 acres laid out at Hogpen Plain. The church must have had some prosperity; although there seems a decline of membership. In those days young people did not behave so well during services as they do now. At a town-meeting in 1663:— “Itt is ordered thatt two of the inhabitanc of the towne shall sitt in the gallery to keepe the youth in order in time of publick exercises to see that they keepe their plases & sitt orderly & inofensavely.” At a town-meeting in June, 1675, it was voted, — That all the inhabitants over twenty meet at the ringing of the bell to assist in raising the new meeting-house, and a fine of twelvecence in money is to be imposed on all who “faile of appearance.” It was some years before the meeting-house was finished. In 1679 we find a vote for seating the people in the new meeting-house, so that it must have been then occupied. It 1680 it was voted that the old meeting-house be taken down. The heathen, as our fathers termed the Indians, were now making trouble; for in 1689 “it was voted that all those which were willing to make a fortification about the Meeting House to Secure themselves and their families from the Violence of the Heathen they shall have free libertie to doe itt.” Captain Samuel Sherburne was the first man to whom was granted liberty to build a pew for his family in the meeting-house; “provided,” the record characteristically reads, “he builds it not so high as Mr. Cotton’s seat is built.” This was in 1687. The minister was then the great man. He was king in his Jerusalem. To him the boys took off their hats, and



the girls curtsied; and from his lips was received the law, as well as the gospel. Still I had rather live in the nineteenth century than in the seventeenth. I believe that now a minister, if he is devoted to his work, industrious in his study, and frank with his people, will have as much influence as it is safe for any man to have. And two hundred years ago the sturdy freemen of Hampton knew when and how to put a check on their pastor. They shewed him great respect, and allowed him much influence; but, to quote the words of a writer of that time, they were very, "very tender and tenacious of their liberties."

In these good old times manners must have been rather rude, when the town deemed it necessary to impose "a fine of 5 shillings on any one who should discharge a gun in the meeting-house, or lead a horse into it."

Eunice Cole, of whose exploits as a witch tradition has so much to say, was a sad trial to Mr. Cotton, who inherited all his father's abhorrence of witchcraft, and a continual vexation to the town. Miserable must have been her death, alone and unattended in her wretched hut on the Ring; and melancholy her funeral, her body hustled without religious service into a hole near by, with a stake driven through it, to which was attached a horse-shoe.

About the same time the following shameful warrant was directed to the constables of several towns, and executed in Hampton and other places:—"You and every one are required, in the King's Majestie's name, to take those vagabond Quakers Anna Coleman, Mary Tompkins, and Anne Ambrose, and making them fast to the cart's tail and drawing the cart through your several towns, to whip them on their naked backs not exceeding ten stripes apiece on each of them in each town; and so to convey them from Constable to Con-





stable till they are out of this jurisdiction, as you will answer at your peril; and this shall be your warrant."

In the trouble with Gov. Cranfield, who seems to have been as badly damaged in principle as he was in fortune, Mr. Cotton does not appear as well as pastor Moody of Portsmouth. The latter bravely met the storm, and went to prison rather than forsake his post or deny his trust. When Cranfield sent the arbitrary message to Hampton that he should come and demand of Mr. Cotton to have the sacrament administered to him according to the liturgy of the Church of England, Mr. Cotton found it convenient to visit friends in Boston. But he, as was then too common, took it on himself to declare the judgments of Heaven. He denounced God's anger on the judges in the Moody trial, declaring of one of them, Henry Roby, that he would not have so honourable burial as an ass. This was strangely fulfilled. Roby was of dissipated habits. "When dead, his body was taken, and thrown into a hole near the great rock in the rear of the old meeting-house sometime in the night." This was probably done to evade an iniquitous law of that time, which permitted the creditor to attach the body of the deceased debtor. There was also indirectness in Mr. Cotton's petition to the General Court for aid in getting the arrears of his salary. The General Court very properly left him to his legal remedy against the persons indebted to him. He had an efficient helper in "good old John Dearborn," as he is styled in the record, one of the early deacons of this church, who died in 1731, at the advanced age of eighty-nine. Mr. Cotton died pastor of this church, April 19, 1686, at the early age of fifty. He was the author of a Catechism not now extant, and is described in Mather's *Magnalia* as "a thorough scholar and able preacher." He certainly was a hard working minister, delivering well studied sermons on the Sabbath, calling the young people about him for



frequent catechising, and visiting among the families of his flock. Also a doughty fighter of the Arminian heresy, and zealous for the truth as he understood it. If he did flee to Boston to escape imprisonment, he was no coward. If he did bend to the storm, he was not a reed shaken in the wind. Should the storm blow too fiercely, he would stand firm; and rather be uprooted and laid prostrate like one of the Hampton pines by the strong wind, than deny the faith. He left a list of the names of sixty-eight members of the church.

His successor was his son, John Cotton. He was ordained pastor of the church November 19, 1696, ten years after the death of his father; but was acting pastor sometime before his ordination. In 1694 the town voted a salary to our *present* minister, Mr. John Cotton. The vote is somewhat of a curiosity. I give it, as recorded. "The Town will give our present minister, Mr. John Cotton Eighty-five pounds a year for his paynes in the work of the Ministry amongst us to be payed every half year in Wheat five shillings pr bushell, Indian Corn three shillings pr bushell, Mault and Rye att four shillings pr bushell, pork at threepence pr pound, all marchble and good over and beside the contribution every quarter formerly agreed upon, and the use and benefit of the House land and Meadow that is appointed for the Ministry. And the Town to maintain the outside fence of said land and Meadow, and besides what the Town shall see case to doe for him in Wood towards maintaining his fiers." Mr. Cotton is also to have ten cords of wood additional, if he will preach a monthly lecture. And there were several votes respecting the repairing of the parsonage fences. There are no regular church records of an earlier date than this. The church was in a sad state of spiritual decline when Mr. Cotton became its pastor. Only twenty-five members, ten male and fifteen female. During his pastorate of thirteen





years two hundred and twenty were added to the church. In 1698 fourteen were dismissed to join the church in Exeter. The congregation must have grown, as there was a demand for more seats in the meeting-house. Discipline was enforced, and active measures taken to bring the young people to a sense of their covenant obligations. In 1704 it was voted, — "That the Present Selectmen take care that all the Clay Walls in the Meeting House that are not ceiled shall be Smoothed over with Clay and Washed with White Lime & made Hansom," "to have the flore over the Beams of sd Meeting House covered with Bords, and these bords that are Seasoned Joynted & nayled Down." Even then they would have things "hansom." A new bell was also purchased to replace the old one, which was "splitt." A parsonage was built. And the fortification was removed from the meeting-house. There seems to have been a general waking up. The life, that cometh down out of Heaven, was astir in this church. From these scattered farm-houses they crowded the roads that led to the Ring; and fervent prayers were answered; and discouraged, and almost despairing, souls were lightened; and eyes dim with watching again saw the salvation of the Lord. The able preacher and faithful pastor, may be worn out by overmuch work, died suddenly, March 27, 1710, at the early age of fifty-two. His memory still lingers, like the fragrance of the faded rose that has been laid on the casket of the loved one. The descendants of some of those, whom he led to Christ, sit at our communion. During his ministry 320 were admitted to full communion, and there were about 975 baptisms.

His successor, Rev. Nathaniel Gookin, who had married his daughter, was ordained pastor November 14, 1710. At a town meeting held in April, 1710, quite a number dissented from the vote to hire a minister for



the town for reasons which do not appear on the record. The prosperity of the church continued under the earnest labors of this excellent man. Although, besides the ordinary losses, in 1711 forty-nine members were dismissed to form the church in Kingston, and in 1726 twenty to join the new church in Rye; at his death the church numbered two hundred and fifty-three members. In 1712 the church had for communion purposes "three Pewter Flagons, 1 Pewter Tanker, 1 Pewter Bason, 1 Table Cloth, & 5 Napkins." A subscription was circulated, and with the money raised "was bought Eight Silver Beakers, which was committed to ye two deacons Dow & Dalton." We also find frequent assessments on members for Communion expenses. A new meeting-house was also built. It was voted that it be built on "ye meeting-house green as near ye present meeting-house as shall be judged convenient;" and that "it be built 60 feet in Length & 46 in width, and 27 feet in stude between joints, and yt a steeple or Turret be built to the house at one end thereof from ye beam upward of convenient and suitable bigness & heidth to said house, and that there shall be one pew in sd house, & that for the minister's family." By a subsequent vote these dimensions were slightly changed to make "it more proportionate and hansomer." The old meeting-house was to be sold for the benefit of Mr. Gookin. On October 18, 1719, the new meeting-house was occupied for the first time. To prevent confusion and unseemly dispute the town appointed a committee to assign seats in the meeting-house. New assignments were made whenever needed; for there are frequent votes ordering such assignment. In the year 1729 were remarkable physical disturbances, terrible thunder-storms and an earthquake. The earthquake was almost anticipated in the first of Mr. Gookin's four sermons on "The day of trouble is at hand." Religion then was in a sad





state. The earthquake shook up the people. There was a marked seriousness through the place, and many were added at successive communions to the church. Mr. Gookin in his graphic description of the earthquake writes,—"Many are now asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. They say, Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten. Making a credible profession of faith and repentance, they draw nigh to the Lord's table, and observe that (hitherto) too much neglected ordinance of his Supper. This is the happy effect, which, by the grace of God, the earthquake has had upon some among us." Mr. Gookin died August 25, 1734, at the early age of forty-eight." "Learned, prudent, pious, and very much loved," a contemporary writer describes him, "excelling as preacher and divine." In the town records there is a glowing eulogy on his character, but too long to quote. His tombstone tells us that "he was a judicious divine, a celebrated preacher, a most vigilant and faithful pastor, an ornament of learning and religion, and an excellent pattern of piety, charity and hospitality." He was certainly an able preacher and faithful pastor. With characteristic kindness the parish built for Mrs. Gookin's use a house and barn, voted her 80 pounds per year during her life or widowhood, 15 cords of wood yearly, and the keeping of three or four cows and a horse. In addition to this fifty pounds were given her for immediate expenses. This church is noted for its kindness to its ministers.

Mr. Ward Cotton was chosen to assist Mr. Gookin, who was in feeble health, and was ordained a few months previous to his death, June 19, 1734. The salary finally voted by the town was:—100 pounds in paper money, and 20 pounds in provision; after four years five pounds to be added annually till the salary amounted to 120 pounds in money and 20 pounds in provision; the use



of the parsonage, hay and land sufficient to keep two or three cows and a horse, and the necessary fire-wood. The promised increase of salary seems to have been more than made good. In 1740 and subsequent years 40 pounds were added to his salary "on account of the low value of paper money this year;" and in 1742 he received a special contribution for his "more than ordinary labours." There were also further additions made to his salary; and in 1742 it was voted to make his "sallary as good as it was when he Bargained with us being tryed by the Silver currency to stand for one year." About this time were several votes ordering that more pews be built. It was also ordered that pews be sold to the highest bidders, and a maximum and minimum price was put on them. About 1737 and 1739 members withdrew to form the church at North Hill (now North Hampton), apparently with some misunderstanding and lack of good will on the part of this church. It seems to have been a time of weeding out and spiritual growth. Frequent cases of discipline are recorded, and frequent additions to the church. At the communion in March, 1741, forty-one members were received, apparently the largest increase at any one time hitherto. During his ministry 437 members were added to the church, and there were about 1200 baptisms. In 1738 we have the first record of a contribution for Home Missions. The meeting-house was repaired, and a new steeple built; four new flagons and four cups purchased for communion purposes; and other improvements made. One sad event happened then, the terrible throat distemper, which first appeared at Kingston, in May, 1735, and "ravaged from Pemaquid to Carolina." "The general description of it is a swelled throat, with white or ash-colored specks, an efflorescence on the skin, great debility of the whole system, and a strong tendency to putridity." Fifty-five children died of it in this par-





ish; in the second parish (Hampton Falls) where it was specially fatal, it carried away one-sixth of the inhabitants within thirteen months. This was a time of much spiritual prosperity and readiness for the work. But a dark cloud gathered on the clear sky. The pastor became physically infirm; and, may be in consequence of this infirmity, lapsed into sad immorality. A council was called, and he was dismissed November 12, 1765. At a meeting held June, 1766, it is recorded, — "In consequence of Mr. Cotton's confession — Voted, to receive Mr. Ward Cotton to the Charitable Communion of this Church as a Brother in Communion with us." But he did not again become its pastor.

Before the next pastor was settled, on June 14, 1776, deacon Joshua Lane was killed by lightning on his door-step. A more terrible storm now swept the whole country; but the church kept on the even tenor of her way. You would not know from the church records that now the war for our National Independence was being waged. Rev. Ebenezer Thayer succeeded Mr. Cotton, and was ordained September 17, 1766. There was some opposition to his settlement. The church then consisted of two hundred and sixty-four members. It grew amid the storm. During Mr. Thayer's pastorate one hundred and two were added to the church. The meeting-house was renovated, new pews added, and seats made for the singers. A parsonage was also built. May be in these troublous times the congregation was not as orderly as it might be. The tything men were instructed to see that persons took their seats immediately on entering the Gallery. One of the most important occurrences of Mr. Thayer's ministry was the change of hymn-books. Up to this time the book used was the Bay State Psalm Book as improved by Henry Dunster, First President of Harvard College, in conjunction with Richard Lyon. It





was voted at town meeting, January 17, 1772,—“To exchange Dunster’s Version of Psalms for Doctr Watts Psalms & Hymns.” It seems to us strange to read in the records of town-meetings votes authorising the singing of new tunes in church service, giving minute instructions as to singing, and fixing the length of intermission between the services. The town interfered in ecclesiastical matters further than was profitable for either town or church. That discipline was not neglected is apparent from votes of the church appointing committees to assist the pastor in this matter. Mr. Thayer preached on Sabbath, and died next day, November 6, 1792. The town paid his funeral expenses, and gave a gratuity to his widow. He was a man of singular purity of life and singleness of purpose; yielding, and yet manly; a lover of peace, without any sacrifice of dignity. In his letter, on the falling off of salary caused by the depreciation of the currency, recorded in the Town Records, he manfully asserts his rights, and yet cheerfully waives these rights in the interests of Christian peace and unity. And in justice to the people it must be said that they honestly attempted by additions to his salary to make good whatever of loss there was from depreciation of the currency. Leaning on a summer afternoon against his tombstone in yonder cemetery, the most conspicuous monument there, the eye wanders with pleasure over the intermingling of green field and grateful forest, while to the ear comes the faintest hint of the vast ocean. Lovelier by far the character of him whose mortal remains sleep in that grave; and the whispers of what he was and what he did for this church should come to our ears now, even as the ocean ever utters its voice beneath the din of day and during the silence of night.

After Mr. Thayer’s death an unfortunate division rent the church. As far back as 1712 we find Presby-



terian tendencies. They now come to the surface. After unsuccessful attempts to settle Nathaniel Thayer, Daniel Dana, and Jonathan Brown, the town voted at a meeting held October 19, 1795, "to give Mr. William Pidgin a call to settle in this town according to the Presbyterian form of church government." The vote stood: 63 for, 20 against. As the town could not, according to Congregational usage, settle a minister without the consent of the church, and as a vote for the call of Mr. Pidgin was negatived by the church, this was a necessary step, if he was to become the minister of Hampton. The church held a meeting on the same day, and adjourned to the 27th, when it was voted,—"Not to give Mr. William Pidgin a call to settle with us." Mr. Pidgin addresses his acceptance of the call "To the Presbyterian Church & Society in Hampton." At a church meeting held January, 1797, a unanimous call was voted to Jesse Appleton, who was ordained February 22. Then began the angry controversy and lawsuits, into the history of which I have not time to enter. A sad cloud rests on Mr. Pidgin's character. Under the wise and judicious leadership of their talented pastor the Congregational Society prospered. Being ousted from the old meeting-house, they built a new meeting-house in 1797, (our present town-house) and dedicated it November 14th of that year. On November 10, 1807, Mr. Appleton was dismissed to assume the Presidency of Bowdoin College; and the old difficulty seemed healed, only to break out in another shape.

The Presbyterians returned to the old church, and the reunited church used the new meeting-house. Rev. Josiah Webster was installed pastor June 8, 1808. The town voted him a salary of \$525, and the use of "the house parsonage." Mr. Webster was as upright in character as in person; scorning to do anything mean or dishonorable; an untiring worker in all moral and





religious reform; a diligent pastor and able preacher; earnest in revival work; treating opponents with manly frankness and Christian courtesy; maintaining his own opinions without regard to consequences, and giving respectful attention to the opinions of others. He was a leader in the Temperance movement when it cost something to be a Temperance worker. By vote of the church October 4, 1835, the use of ardent spirits was prohibited to church members. There was but one vote in the negative. The first Sunday-School was organized during his pastorate in 1818, and three years later the first Sunday-School Library was introduced.

On March 31, 1825, the present articles of faith and covenant was adopted,—“former attempts to adopt articles having failed; but” as the record reads, “God has produced a mighty change within the last 17 years.”

In 1808 it was voted to tear down the old meeting-house on the Green, and sell the lots at public auction.

Stoves were introduced by a vote of the town in 1821. The stove was so to be placed “as not to injure the meeting-house, or any person who sits therein.” Our fathers must have been afraid that the thing would explode. Mr. Webster was an earnest worker in revival efforts; but, strange to say, there was much opposition in the church to special efforts and revival work. But he persevered in face of opposition, and much success attended his labors. We read of a prayer-meeting that continued three or four hours.

There was a marked work of grace in 1819, and thirty-four members were added to the church. In connection with this revival Mr. Webster writes:—“A very large number, besides those who obtained hope of a new heart, seemed convinced that the special influences of God’s Spirit were sent down upon us, tho’ always before many of them had denied any such influences.” In the long and bitter controversy with the Baptist Society respecting the ministerial fund, and which resulted in the separation of the town from the church, Mr. Webster never stooped to take an unfair advantage; and this



cannot be said of all the parties to this strife. But I do not propose to rake up the embers of a scarcely extinguished quarrel. At the March town-meeting, 1835, it was voted, — "That Mr. Webster be no longer minister of the town, and that the Ministerial funds be divided." To this vote the selectmen of the Congregational Society objected. The controversy was substantially settled by a division of the fund (I cannot say, an equitable division) among the three Societies in 1836; though the echoes of the strife lingered about three years longer. In 1844 the old meeting-house became the town-house. Mr. Webster died March 27, 1837. During his ministry one hundred and seventy members were admitted to the church. In yonder cemetery a granite shaft fitly symbolises the strong and upright character of him whose dust rests beneath.

I can merely glance at his successors, confining myself to the installed pastors. Erasmus D. Eldridge was called to the pastorate in 1838, and dismissed because of failing health in 1849. During his ministry the building we now occupy was built. Under his faithful labors one hundred and fourteen members were received on profession of faith. His successor, Rev. Solomon P. Fay, was ordained in 1849. The church was then on a sea of troubles; but this skilful pilot at the helm brought her safely through. At this critical period of her history it was well for the church that there stood in her pulpit one who was so able a preacher, and so wise and judicious a pastor. Mr. Fay was dismissed August 29, 1854. Rev. John Colby became pastor of the church in October, 1855, and was dismissed in November, 1863. The church grew spiritually under his zealous ministry; and in the troubles that arose his voice always was for peace. The church-meeting held June 27, 1864, which remained in session until 2 o'clock in the morning, must have been very in-





teresting or—very stormy. The next settled pastor, Rev. John W. Dodge, was installed October 19, 1865, and dismissed November 18, 1868. His labors here were abundantly blessed, and many members were added to the church. After being about a year acting pastor, Rev. James McLean was installed December 15, 1870; and was dismissed after a short, somewhat troubled, but on the whole successful, pastorate of one year. During this time a new hymn-book, "The Tribute of Praise," was introduced. I think a better might easily have been selected. To-day we lay it aside, and introduce "Spiritual Songs." The next pastor of this church, Rev. Walcott W. Fay, was ordained February 20, 1884, and dismissed November 16, 1886. The unbroken harmony of the church and frequent additions to its membership during this short pastorate testify to the successful labors of this young, energetic, and talented minister, whose worth the churches are now finding out.

This brings the history of the church down to the present time. It has now 136 resident members; 49 males, and 87 females. The little sapling has grown to be a great tree. The little congregation, that met in the rude log meeting-house two hundred and fifty years ago, has continued its unbroken history, the oldest church in New Hampshire, down to this year of grace, 1888. Many changes have taken place. The pine forests of Winnicunett have been cut down. The Indian wigwam has vanished. Productive farms and comfortable homes have displaced the wilderness. The old landmarks are disappearing. Meeting-houses have been built, and taken down, and rebuilt. Creeds have changed; and new modes of worship crowded out the old. But the church remains the same, because her foundation is He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. She still holds to the same truths, and worships the same God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Her Bible is the





same, and her essential faith the same. She has written the epitaphs on the old tomb-stones in yonder ancient cemetery; she speaks the same words of hope by dying beds to-day. Now, as then, at marriage feasts she changes the water of common mercies into the wine of heavenly blessings; and writes over the gates of the cemetery not, "We are all passing away;" but, "I am the resurrection and the life." Yes, as out yonder, in the calm and the storm; when in the still moonlight the waves flash and gem the rocks with silvery spangles, and when the fog creeps over the sea and hides the treacherous rocks; when the stars listen to ocean's gentle murmur, and when the loud voice of the angry billows startle the darkened heavens,—the light from White Island flashes over the sea, and safely guides the ship on its course; so in the calm and the tempest—when peace and happiness bless the life, and when the stress and storm of trial and temptation beat upon it, this church has been the lighthouse, sending its unquenched rays across the waters and through the darkness, safely guiding on his way every voyager to yon eternal shore.

May this old church, which has such a grand history behind it, for many centuries to come still point the way to heaven. May the succession of able and faithful ministers who have stood in its pulpit, be continued for more than two hundred and fifty years in the future. When the congregation, that now assembles within the walls of its meeting-house, are sleeping in yonder cemetery may it still send to heaven the voice of prayer and praise, and from its pulpit still be broken the bread of life to hungry multitudes. May it still at marriage feasts change the water into wine, and carry the ministrations of the blessed gospel of Christ to the sick and into the homes of the disconsolate. Yes, I will add the petition, as at the beginning there was but one church in the town, and every Christian found a con-



genial home within its pale, and fit food for his soul hunger in its ministrations; so may this venerable church broaden its creed, and diversify its modes of worship, and present the gospel simply as the Master taught it, that again every disciple of Christ in the place shall be assured of a welcome to its ordinances, find a sweet resting-place in its communion, be fed by the pure bread of life broken in its pulpit, and strengthened and guided on his way heavenward by the Christ-like charity of its members and the Christly worship of its services. May it be, not as "the great red star" that at every sunset flashes from White Island, but as the immortal star looking down from the wide heaven, and sending its light across the path of many generations.

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